THE DUTY AND SAFETY

OF

IMMEDIATE EMANCIPATION.

This is the age of Universal Emancipation. The progress of light and liberty will not be arrested, until our country is liberated from mental and corporeal vassalage. The struggle may be severe, but the result is certain. The shackles are destined soon to fall from the enslaved African. It may be longer before the fear of man will cease, and the rod under which white men quake and cower will be broken; but truth uttered, published, and enforced by means of a Free Press, will eventually break every yoke, and set the captives free.

Although we do not live in the very region of negro slavery, yet much may be done by us towards effecting its entire abolition. Let New England, alone, speak out with a united and decided voice in favor of immediate emancipation, and the work would be accomplished. But hold! On every hand I hear already a violent outcry, "Agitator!" "Fanatic!" "Incendiary!" and were the name of the writer known, he might be pointed out for popular vengeance, as was lately done in the great emporium of America. An erudite and Christian Reviewer, a professed friend of emancipation, joins in the clamor, and imperiously demands an explanation. "What do you mean by immediate emancipation?" Why, Sir, I mean what I say. An attempt to define a phrase of such obvious import, would only "darken counsel by words without knowledge." It might also give color to the abusive charges which you bring against the advocates of this doctrine; that "they are guilty of a certain logical sleight of hand, which perplexes, irritates and inflames the public;" that "there is in their use of language a

sophism, by which they unwittingly impose on their own minds, and inflame the minds of others;" that "their well intended definitions, unable to overcome that intrinsic power by which words retain their popular signification, define only to mystify, and mystify only to irritate." Wonderful definitions! But with all their magic art, they are "unable to overcome the intrinsic power of words." Charity would incline us to believe that the Reviewer, in firing a gingle of verbosity at immediate abolitionists, has "unwittingly" let drive at a harmless term. Hear him once more. "The duty of immediate emancipation is one thing. The immediate duty of emancipation is another thing." When we speak of emancipation without any qualification or restriction, none certainly are intended or implied; and the word has its full and fair import; and when we speak of it as an *immediate duty*, we mean that it is a duty to abolish slavery immediately. Will the Reviewer tell us what else is meant by the *duty of immediate emancipation?*

But why this ungenerous attempt to cast odium upon a subject, which all agree is deeply interesting to the community. It surely comes with an ill grace from one who says he is "not committed on the subject, so as to be unwilling to learn." The advocates of immediate emancipation have hitherto been opposed, with much abuse and violence; and although I do not offer this as an argument in their favor, I cannot help remarking that these are the weapons always made use of by men who, knowing the weakness of their cause, are determined to stick to it right or wrong.

It is not claimed that the slaves are entitled to an equality with white people, with respect to political privileges. Emancipation does not confer on them such privileges; and they may be granted or withheld by the Government, without any just cause of complaint. The country was originally settled by white men, and they had a right to establish the Government, and might

justly exclude from the administration of it, not only colored people, but all foreigners who should afterwards come to reside among them. White foreigners are now admitted to citizenship as a matter of favor, not on the ground of right, and upon just such terms as Congress please to prescribe. In several of the States where slavery is abolished, colored people are expressly excluded from any share in the Government, and still we hear no complaint of their being thereby deprived of their privileges, or their freedom.

Slavery is unjust, because it is a wrong done to our neighbor. It is sinful, because it is a transgression of the law of God. Every degree and form of it is criminal, and an abhorrence in the sight of the Infinite Jehovah. Why then talk of the mitigation of slavery? It may be less criminal, but still it will be a crime, and nothing can bleach or neutralize its essential properties. It will continue to be a transgression of the law of God, until entirely abolished. The Government may appoint a curator over an individual, to protect him from his own improvidence, or from the frauds of others; but this is not slavery, nor any infringement of private rights, provided it is not done wantonly, and without sufficient cause. The appointment should be made for reasons shown, as in the case of white men, otherwise it is manifestly unjust.

The idea that immediate emancipation would be an act of injustice to the slave, is preposterous. What! to restore a man to the rights of which he has been violently and wrongfully deprived, is unjust! To knock off the shackles from Casper Hauser, to burst open the doors of his dungeon, and to bring him out to the light of day, was unjust! Was ever such a plea heard before? Did Casper make it? Did ever a slave or a captive complain that his rights were infringed, by his being restored to liberty? Suits are brought for false imprisonment, being the unlawful detention of a person; but whoever brought a suit on account of his being discharged from false imprisonment. A compensation may

be justly due to the slave for his years of bootless service, and coarse and scanty fare, for his enfeebled frame, and furrowed visage, for the pangs of an aching heart, and even for his ignorance and his depravity. He will indeed have a claim which will be recognized, at least by the Court of Heaven. It may be disallowed now, but it will one day be recognized even by the slave-holder. In disallowing this claim, and dismissing his slaves needy and friendless, ignorant and depraved, consists that injustice which is erroneously imputed to the act of emancipation.

The project of "alleviating the bondage," and "improving the condition" of the slave by placing him in a state of pupilage, in which he becomes merely a "person held to service," and is to be trained up and qualified for freedom, for active life, and for eternal felicity, is entirely utopian, and illusory. It supposes not only a substantial abolition of slavery, by the voluntary act of the master; but an entire change in his views and feelings, regarding his slave. He no longer looks upon him as an article of merchandize, and as a beast of burden; but views and treats him as a human and immortal being, entitled to equal privileges with himself, and embraced in the purview of the great law of love. From pure benevolence, he retains him a few years in his service, only as a hired laborer; while by suitable instruction, and parental tutelage, he shall endow him with useful knowledge, and with the principles and habits of virtue. Is this what is meant by the "preparatory" stage, the state of "pupilage," the "arrangements for gradually introducing the slave into the privilege of self-employment, and self-control?" O! no. The slave-holders, until their natures are changed, will not voluntarily do all this. We, gradual abolitionists, propose that the slaves shall "no longer be kept in heathenish darkness, by laws expressly enacted to make their instruction a criminal offence." "The face of legislation is to be turned the other way; strong and thorough enactments will provide for their instruction at

the public expense; and the master whose slaves are found untaught, is to be guilty of a crime against the prosperity and safety of the State." How easy to erect plausible paper systems, and to form pretty day dreams; but it should be remembered that all the glory of them is purchased at the expense of the cause of truth and righteousness. The slave-holders, forsooth, though they will not voluntarily adopt and execute this system, yet as legislators, will cordially unite in providing strong and thorough enactments to compel themselves to do it; and then, in the same heroic spirit, will faithfully and conscientiously execute the laws they have made! The want of moral courage is doing immense injury to the cause of truth, respecting a variety of subjects, and making work for bitter repentance.

The argument principally relied on by the opponents of immediate emancipation, is the danger to which it would expose the country. It is said to be pregnant with such consequences as to render it unjust to the white population, and to justify the continuance of slavery. Let us test this principle. I suppose it will be conceded that slavery in the abstract, is unjust. *Contra negantem principia non est disputandum.* There must have been a period in the history of the country, when emancipation would not have occasioned any serious evils, either to the slaves, or to the white people, and when of course it would not have been unjust. "Negro slavery was introduced into Virginia in 1620, by a Dutch ship which entered James river, and landed twenty slaves." Had these slaves been emancipated before any more were brought to the colony, the act would not then have been denominated unjust. "James Smith, of Boston, and Thomas Keyser, imported the first cargo of slaves into Massachusetts. Throughout the colony, the cry of justice was raised against them, as malefactors and murderers. The guilty men were committed for the offence, and the representatives of the people, ordered the negroes to

be restored to their native country at the public charge." But circumstances have changed. We have now increased the number of our slaves, and also the danger of emancipation to that extent, that the nature of slavery itself is also changed. In the course of this process, we must have arrived at a point, where there was an exact balance between the justice which was due to the slaves, and that which was due to their masters; when the evils of emancipation were precisely sufficient to do away the injustice and criminality of slavery. May we not inquire of our opponents, where this point is to be found? A solution of the problem would not only furnish a curious exercise of their ingenuity, but would also inform them how much sin they must commit, and how much misery they must occasion, to become guiltless, and to stand acquitted and justified in the sight of a holy law. This is one instance among a thousand in which the obligations of eternal rectitude are set aside by the claims of selfishness, and the dread of suffering. What if the slave-holders, or the public, who have authorized and encouraged slavery, should roll up the perils of emancipation over their heads like a mountain wave; instead of mitigating, it would enhance their guilt, and cause suffering humanity to send up to Heaven a louder cry for vengeance. If the slaves are ignorant, it is because the means of knowledge have been withheld from them. If they are licentious and depraved, it is because they have been kept under the lash, and nurtured in schools of vice, instead of being subjected to the influence of moral discipline, and of religious instruction. These traits in their character constitute a part of their sufferings, and are contained in the catalogue of their wrongs, but supply no arguments for the continuance of slavery.

But what is the real danger from immediate emancipation? No facts are stated, no analogous case is cited to justify the fears and predictions of our opponents. Their ideas on this subject are speculative, and may be deluso-

ry. Warmth and bitterness will pervert the judgment of one man as well as another. The cause of truth requires that we give to this question the calm and deliberate exercise of enlightened reason.

God has made of one blood all nations of men. The negroes have like passions with other men, and like them, always act in the view of motives. Injuries provoke, and kindness and charity assuage their passions. It is as true of them, as of white men, that a soft answer turneth away wrath. Under the oppressive yoke of bondage they are indolent, sullen and vengeful. Say to them that they are free, and that they shall receive a just recompense for their labor, and the spirit of revenge will in a moment give place to kind and generous emotions. Hope and joy and gratitude, even for an act of justice, will animate their bosoms, and light up their sad and sullen visages with smiles. A principle of action which governs all men, and which now for the first time, is presented to their minds, will operate upon them with the power of enchantment. The wages of labor, the thrilling sensations of liberty, the prospect of ease and independence, of social and domestic comfort, will raise them from the depths of degradation and despair, will inspire them with a better temper, and form them to better habits.

Emancipation will create between the master and the slave a mutual dependence. Both will have wants which must be supplied, and for the supply of which, each will be dependent on the other. The former will want labor, and the latter will want the wages of labor; and there must be some repulsive power which does not belong to the nature of the case, to prevent an agreement by which their mutual wants will be supplied.

The consequences which are to result from emancipation, are dependent in a great measure upon the white people. They owe to the slaves other, and even higher duties, than that of restoring their liberty. They are bound to educate and to Christianize them, and to provide

for their temporal wants. The master stands towards his slaves in the place of a parent, and the responsibilities of that relation rest upon him, and will not cease at the period of emancipation. If a white man should make a slave of his son, and at the age of manhood, should turn him loose upon society, in the condition of colored slaves, would he not be held accountable at the bar of public opinion, for the evils thus inflicted upon the community, through his son; and at the bar of God, for the blood of his lost soul? Would the public remain quiet, especially in these times, while the father justified himself, and charged all these evils upon the ignorance and depravity of his brutalized offspring? It would not be a subject of complaint, that the slave had been liberated, or that he had been liberated too soon, but that parental care and provision continued to be withheld from him;—that at the termination of his servitude, he had been turned off helpless and forlorn, to become a burden and a pest to society.

Do the christian public expect to stand with folded arms, idle spectators of those evils which, in imagination, they now see pouring in upon them like a flood? They have been long and fervently praying, that a door might be opened for the propagation of the gospel, among all the nations of the earth; that all the obstacles in the way of it, might be removed; that all tyranny and oppression, might cease; that God would break every yoke, and set the captives free. Would they not, when their prayers were heard, and the slaves in our own country were liberated, fly to their rescue from endless ruin? The slaves have higher demands upon our charity, than any other people upon earth. Duty would require, that we should lose not a moment, nor let a soul perish through ignorance of the Gospel, to whom its blessed light could be communicated. Preachers and Teachers, and Bibles and Tracts should be sent to all their habitations; and the abundant means we possess, should be employed in im-

proving their condition, and in the salvation of their souls. Who can calculate the moral and meliorating influence of such Christian efforts, upon this despised and degraded race. We cannot reasonably object to emancipation, if all the evils of it, whether real or imaginary, may be averted by a faithful discharge of our duty.

In addition to the light of reason, we can adduce the evidence of experience, to show that the evils predicted by our opponents are imaginary, and that immediate emancipation would be safe and salutary, both for the master and the slave. This evidence has been collected and presented to the public, in an able address, of the New-York City Anti-Slavery Society, from which the following extracts are made :

"Bolivar proclaimed liberty to his slaves, and many proprietors followed his example: nearly a million of colored slaves inhabited Columbia at that time, and a large part were immediately emancipated. M. Ravenga declares, that the effect has been a degree of docility, on the part of the blacks, and a degree of security on the part of the whites, unknown in any preceding period of the history of that Republic."

"In speaking of the slaves captured by British vessels, and sent to Sierra Leone, Clarkson says: They must have contracted as mortal a hatred of the whites, from their sufferings on board ship, by fetters, whips, and suffocation in the hold, as the West Indian, from those severities which are attached to their bondage, upon shore. Under these circumstances then, we find them made free; but observe, not after any preparatory discipline, but almost suddenly, and not singly, but in bodies at a time. We find them also settled, or made to live under the unnatural government of the whites; and what is more extraordinary, we find their present number, as compared with that of the whites, in the same colony, nearly as one hundred and fifty, to one; notwithstanding which superiority, fresh emancipations are constantly taking place, as fresh cargoes of the captured, arrive in port."

"Dr. Walsh states, that in Brazil, there are more than half a million enfranchised persons—Africans, or of Af-

rican descent, who were either slaves, or are the descendants of slaves. He says, they are, generally speaking, well conducted and industrious persons."

"St. Domingo, has reduced to practice the same doctrines, with similar good effects. 'In 1794, the Conventional Assembly of France, passed a decree for the abolition of Slavery, throughout the French colonies. Colonel Malefant, a slave-proprietor, resident at the time in the island, says: The negroes remained quiet, both in the South and in the West, and they continued to work upon all the plantations. There were estates indeed, which had neither owners nor managers resident upon them; for some of these had been put into prison by Montbrun; and others, fearing the same fate, had fled to the quarter which had just been given up to the English. Yet upon these estates, though abandoned, the negroes continued their labors, where there were any, even inferior agents, to guide them; and on those estates where no white men were left to direct them, they betook themselves to the planting of provisions; but upon all the plantations where the whites resided, the blacks continued as quietly as before.' The number of slaves liberated in St. Domingo, was about 500,000. They were all made free at once, without any previous notice or preparation. Admiral Fleming says: 'The most happy, the best fed, and the most comfortable negroes I ever saw in the West Indies, were in Hayti.'"

"The enfranchised inhabitants of Jamaica are more numerous than the whites; and yet it appears by returns printed by order of the House of Commons, that the proportion of criminal convictions of whites, and of enfranchised persons, was as twenty-four of the former, to eight of the latter. In Barbadoes the free negroes and mulattoes are industrious, and are never seen begging; whereas the island is pestered with white beggars, of all ages. In Trinidad, there are upwards of fifteen thousand free people of color; there is not a single pauper among them; they live independently and comfortably, and nearly half the island is said to be in their hands."

The experiment which is now making in the West Indies, by the British Government, so far as it has come to our knowledge, is in favor of entire and immediate abolition. In those islands where the system of appren-

ticeship has been adopted, the slaves are restive and turbulent; but generally quiet, and willing to labor where they have been completely emancipated. If on further trial these two systems should generally be followed by the same opposite effects, it must settle the question respecting the safety and the expediency of immediate emancipation.

Abolitionists do not propose to effect their object by breaking down the barriers of the Constitution, nor by any compulsory legislative enactments. Congress cannot abolish slavery, and the State Legislatures will not do it; the only hope therefore, is from a voluntary abandonment of the system by the slave-holders. To them the appeal is made. Arguments are addressed to their understandings and their consciences, to their sense of duty and of interest. It is the light of truth shed over the dismal region of slavery, which is to accomplish the work. It is the same power which is now effecting such interesting and important changes throughout the moral world, and which is mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds.

The cause of abolition is adapted to the spirit of the times, and is auxiliary to those associations of charity which are formed for the conversion of the world. It will enlist the feelings, and call forth the energies, of the philanthropist and of the Christian. The design is not merely to emancipate, but also to Christianize this unfortunate race; and it has become necessary that they should be emancipated before the Gospel can be preached to them.

There is something strange and unnatural in those sympathies which are wasted in piteous moans, over the injustice and oppression of other climes, but are unmoved at still greater injustice and oppression, in the bosom of our own country. And it is even more strange and mysterious, that Christians should labor and pray for the conversion of distant heathen nations, and yet offer no

prayers, and make no efforts for the salvation of two million of human beings, kept in heathenish ignorance by our own countrymen. Probably one hundred of these miserable beings perish every day. Will those Christians who are opposed to immediate emancipation, specify the particular grounds which will justify this havoc of immortal souls? Are there any sacrifices too great for us to make, or any perils which we ought not cheerfully to endure, that we may impart to them the knowledge of Christ, and his salvation, before they drop into the bottomless pit? If such considerations were to deter Christians from a discharge of their duty, the progress of the Gospel might be arrested, and the world never be converted to God.

The maxims of worldly policy, and the selfish inclinations of the heart, are holding back the Church from that measure of service which the law and the Gospel prescribe. Expedience is often substituted for plain and indispensable duty. How illy prepared is the Church to "wrestle against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Every Christian soldier should have that perfect love which casteth out fear, and that faith which overcometh the world. He will not wantonly rush into danger, nor go out of his way to provoke persecution; but having sought diligently, and prayerfully for the path of duty, and for the footsteps of the Saviour, he will follow them with a firm, unwavering purpose, though they should lead to the Judgment Hall of Pilate, or even to the Cross of Calvary.

WILBERFORCE.